Legally, indeed, his property escheated to the Crown: though the reality was seldom so severe, and in most cases (though not in all) the Treasury restricted its claims to one-half the dead man's property, handing the rest back to his legal heirs so that they might accumulate further profits for the royal benefit. Yet even after the Middle Ages were closed, and the former conception of royal rights was modified, the actual result was frequently identical. Thus Samuel Oppenheimer, the Court Factor at Vienna at the period of the War of Spanish Succession, was forced into bankruptcy in consequence of an unpaid debt from the Imperial Treasury amounting to 6,000,000 florins. A more astonishing case still was that of Mordecai Meisel, the Jewish philanthropist, the synagogue built by whom is still among the sights of Prague. The story is best related in the words of the writer of a Fugger News Letter—an observer who can hardly be described as pro-Jewish:

From Prague, the 5th day of April, 1601.

"A short time ago there died here the Jew Meisel. Notwithstanding that he had left His Imperial Majesty ten thousand florins, and much cash also to the Hospital for poor Christians and Jews, His Imperial Majesty on the following Saturday, viz. the Sabbath of the Jews, ordered Herr von Sternberg, at that time President of the Bohemian Chamber, to enter the Jew's house forcibly and to seize everything there was. The widow of Meisel handed this over

willingly, for she had already set aside and hidden the best part of the treasure. That which was taken away came to forty-five thousand florins in cash, promissory notes, jewels, clothes and all kinds of coins. After this, however, the President, against whom the Jewess and the sons of the two brothers of Meisel had raised a strong protest to the privy councillors, was not